

Evaluation of First Born Program for Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Foundation

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Children in rural New Mexico are more likely to experience adverse life events such as child abuse or parental substance abuse in childhood, and youth and adults in this region exhibit extremely poor outcomes relative to their peers around the U.S. To help address this problem, a public/private partnership, which includes the LANL Foundation and the State of New Mexico, is implementing the First Born Program (FBP) in Rio Arriba and Taos Counties. FBP is an evidence-based, home visitation program that uses clinically trained professionals to provide parents and families with the information, training, and resource access, promote the highest level of development for a newborn infant up to age three—the most important period for early brain development.

The logic model of this intervention is a reasonable one, and longitudinal studies of other child development programs indicate that early and continuous intervention can have a positive impact on a person's early childhood and lifelong development. However, a sound logic model and supporting evidence from other interventions is not a guarantee that a prevention program will have its intended effects. This study undertakes an impact evaluation to assess the effectiveness of this model in New Mexico.

Research Design. The Northern New Mexico implementation of FBP is a community-based universal model. The research design most applicable to this program setting is a pretreatment cohort control group design. This design involves comparing outcomes of eligible families after the FBP began operating to outcomes of target families who would have been eligible for FBP but gave birth before the program commenced. Data collection will begin this spring. We plan to collect data that will enable us to estimate a regression model that identifies the treatment and other factors that explain the ultimate and intermediate outcomes for both children and mothers. Our objective is to collect data until study children are eight years old.

The Evaluation Team. LANL statistician Aparna V. Huzurbazar will lead the project through an appointment at the New Mexico Consortium. The RAND Corporation of Santa Monica, CA, is leading the study with senior economist Rebecca Kilburn as the Project Leader. The project takes advantage of partnerships and assets in New Mexico, and peer review from nationally recognized leaders in the field.

For further information contact Aparna V. Huzurbazar at aparna@lanl.gov.

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Fig. 1. Pictured are family Isidor Chavez, Marie McClard, and daughter Izabella (Bella) Chavez. Photo by Don Usner, LANL Foundation.

